

THIS ISSUE:

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DEAR SUBSCRIBER

### Home Again

A few years ago, a friend who is a very frequent traveler to Europe, sent me a New Yorker cartoon: In it a man is standing at a large window looking out over a big-city skyline while speaking into a phone: "It's us. We drank. We ate. We're back."

I guess it was our friend's way of saying not much happened on his latest trip that hadn't happened before.

When it comes to airplanes, airports and rental cars, nothing out of the ordinary is good news. That's the way it was with our April trip. **Swissair** did its usual bang-up job, the Zürich Airport remains the most convenient we've seen anywhere and the 1994 Ford Scorpio we rented had less than 2,000 miles on it. SR #107, a nonstop from Los Angeles, landed about 5:15 p.m. Our bags were on the carousel after a wait of less than five minutes, we loaded them onto one of those big, easy-rolling European carts that can negotiate escalators (unlike the rickety pieces of junk one pays \$1 to rent in Los Angeles and San Francisco) and walked quickly out the "nothing to declare" door. A few steps into the garage from the car rental counter, on the same level, was our car; no shuttles, no hassle. We took a pretty backroad to Basel (see inset page 2) and were checked into our hotel room and out for a walk by 7:15 p.m., some two hours after landing.

(One slightly confusing part of the process: to pick up rental cars you must go to Terminal B. Once there you'll see signs pointing toward elevators to the car rental area at level #5. However, some elevators go only to level #4. If that happens to you, get off at level #4 and go up one more floor via the lifts to your right as you exit.)

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# GEMÜTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria, Switzerland & the New Europe

# STEYR

*All too often in Europe, the small, quaint, walled towns, with interesting buildings and pretty settings, turn into high-priced theme parks with too many buses, souvenir shops and visitors trying to soak it all up in two hours. Not so with Steyr in Austria.*

**T**his newsletter probably serves its readers best when it reports on destinations like Steyr, an enchanting town with enough 'old world' allure to maintain a visitor's interest for a few days but not so Disneyland cute that it attracts the multitudes.

Steyr, which gave the name to the province of Styria but is in Upper Austria, is about a third of the way from Salzburg to

Vienna, south of Linz and the main east-west Autobahn. Its picturesque *altstadt* sits on the peninsula formed by the confluence of the Steyr and Enns rivers.

The town's history dates to 980 when the Styraburg — now called Lamberg Castle — was built. A fire destroyed Steyr in 1727, but in the middle of the 19th century a local lad named Joseph Werndl came to the rescue. He began to

manufacture guns and Steyr became one of Europe's main weapons suppliers, an activity that continued through two world wars. (On a more positive note, Werndl and Steyr are given credit for erecting Europe's first electric street lights in 1884.) Werndl's company eventually became Steyr-Daimler-Puch, a World War II arms producer and the town's industrial installations were

*Continued on page 3...*

## 15 Suggestions on Avoiding the Summer Tourist Crush

**E**urope is about to experience an invasion bigger than D-Day. It will be mostly by air. Every day battalions of tourists will stream off transatlantic flights into airports all over the continent. For the most part, they'll head for the big cities and "must see" smaller ones like Rothenburg, Lucerne and Salzburg. There they will crowd the museums and castles, gobble up the hotel rooms and jostle each other for a little shade and a table at a sidewalk café.

If that's not your idea of a vacation, but you're stuck with traveling between June and October, here are 15 suggestions — five each in Germany, Austria and Switzerland

— to get you off the main tourist track on to paths less well trod and also save you some money.

### Germany

#### Spend 3 Days In Bamberg

**A** marvelous town, with Rothenburg-like

charm. Wander the *altstadt* at dusk, just as the lights which illuminate the old buildings, bridges and statuary begin to take effect.

**Don't Miss:** Rauchbier ("smoky" beer) at Brauerei Schlenkerla, Dominikanerstrasse 6.

**Recommended Hotels:** Hotel St.

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## DEAR SUBSCRIBER

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For travelers headed downtown, trains run frequently to the Main Rail Station, a trip of 10-12 minutes costing about \$4 one-way.

The rest of our trip had its moments: a drive in an April snowstorm through the Black Forest, a carriage ride in the woods above Zürich, an Easter Sunday visit to Basel's splendid zoo, a search for interesting hotels along the Swiss shore of Lake Constance (The Bodensee) and a stay at the posh Brenner's Park Hotel in Baden-Baden.

On our last night we realized — and regretted — that we had been dining much too high on the hog. Our usual routine is to eat simply most nights and do the white linen and candlelight gig about once a week. This trip, I'm sorry to say, it was the other way around. Which puts me in mind of the damnable habit upmarket restaurants have of selling one an expensive bottle of wine, opening it and then putting it somewhere out of reach. The wine — *your wine* — is then doled out as the waiter sees fit. Too often, conversation distracts the table and first thing you know, everyone's glasses have been refilled, including some who only wanted half a glass in the first place. But the waiter has done his job, the bottle is now empty and the host must order another. Excuse me, but low-rent as it may sound, when I spend \$35 or more on a bottle of wine I want to have some control over it. At my table I know who wants only a little wine and who wants a little more. Cousin Mildred isn't the least offended by this, she doesn't like wine anyway. And Uncle Jack, who dearly loves the stuff, appreciates that he gets a larger portion.

While I'm warmed up here are a couple of more whines:

• A pox on hotels who don't put real hangers in guestroom closets, instead substituting hangers which must be inserted onto a permanently attached device on the closet's hanging rod. (Better yet, a pox on the jerks who stole enough real hangers that hotels had to take such measures.)

• And as for those hotels (one, surprisingly, is Baden-Baden's great **Brenner's Park**) who charge for access to AT&T's USADirect — and similar services offered by MCI and Sprint — I can't find strong enough words of condemnation. Like many

the hotel a 10 DM (\$6) fee for each call made; a tidy sum if one stays for a few days and makes daily phone calls to the U.S. When asked about this, a Brenner's Park official indicated it was on a "trial" basis and anyway the hotel is not a business person's hotel and there aren't many calls placed to the U.S. by guests from the U.S. If that's the case, then there are two good reasons to discontinue the practice of charging for such calls: it's bad public relations and it doesn't produce much revenue. Charge as much as the traffic will bear for room and meals — even breakfast — but don't build a bridge where none need exist and then whack guests \$6 every time they have to cross it. Perhaps I am unfairly singling out the Brenner's Park, because apparently this practice is SOP for Baden-Baden hotels. Shame on them all. We'll have much to say that is highly complimentary about the Brenner's Park in a later issue.

### Did you know?

Much to the dismay and anger of neighboring countries, the Swiss have voted a total ban on trucks transiting the country. It will take effect in 2004. The concern, of course, is to curb pollution in narrow Alpine valleys. Switzerland plans to expand its rail system and rework transit charges to encourage shippers to choose rail over road. Part of the plan calls for two new fast north-south rail lines connecting Basel and Milan. The lines would pass through two new tunnels through the Alps, one under the Gotthard pass and the other through the Lötschberg south of Bern and then on to the existing rail tunnel through the Simplon Pass. It is envisioned that this will reduce the time of the rail journey between Basel and Milan by two hours. The Gotthard base tunnel will be 57 km (35 miles) long, comparable in length to the Eurotunnel. The tunnels and rail lines will not be finished prior to the truck ban.

The truck stop business in Switzerland would seem not to be a growth industry. — RHB

### Backroads: Zürich Airport to Basel

You'll need *Die Generalkarte Switzerland #1* or a comparable map for this little drive. Leaving the Zürich Airport, follow the green signs toward the Bern-Basel Autobahn (remember, in Switzerland the green signs mean Autobahn; in Germany and Austria, the blue signs signify Autobahn and the green signs mean regular surface roads). Do not take the Basel turnoff, but go one more exit to Oensingen. Go north and into Balsthal. In the center of town turn left at the Passwang-Ramiswil sign. At the outskirts of town is a sign that indicates whether the pass is open.

Once past several hairpin turns and through the tunnel in the mountain just below the summit, you will encounter some lovely views of the valley beyond. On the way down, the road narrows considerably and there are no guard rails.

Follow the signs to Basel through Breitenbach and Laufen. ☞

small business people, I call my office every day I'm in Europe. Sometimes that call spawns others. In the vast majority of European hotels access to USADirect is treated as a local call and at checkout doesn't *even appear on the bill*. One simply dials an outside line, then a code for connection to the AT&T operator in the U.S. If done from a pay phone, the charge is the same as for a local call. Of course, the call appears on your AT&T bill at a slightly higher rate than a normal U.S. long-distance call. At the Brenner's Park, however, one must not only go through the hotel operator but pay

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### HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Category	Scale	Hotel Rating Criteria	
Unacceptable	0 - 3	People/Service	30%
Adequate	4 - 7	Location/Setting	15%
Average	8 - 11	Guestrooms	30%
Above Average	12 - 15	Public rooms	5%
Excellent	16 - 20	Facilities/Restaurant	20%

#### Special Designations

**G** By virtue of location, decor, special charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.

**\$** Offers significant value.

#### Restaurant Criteria

Food 65%  
Service 20%  
Atmosphere 15%

## STEYR

Continued from page 1

heavily bombed in 1944. Until 1955, Steyr was the border town between the American and Soviet occupational zones. These days the city still makes it living in the iron trade: the Steyr-Puch company builds motorbikes and there is also a BMW truck assembly plant.

Entrance to the *altstadt* is through an arched stone gate, part of the wall that protected the city in medieval times. Inside is a wide square lined with well-preserved Gothic and Renaissance buildings. Further on, the main square narrows to become the town's alley-size main shopping street, the Eisengasse, and eventually passes through another gate and on to where the two rivers become one.

Most sights are within a five-minute walk of the square and for information about them you can use Michelin's *Green Guide for Austria* or stop by Steyr's amiable and efficient tourist office which is on the square at Stadtplatz 27.

One excursion not to be missed in the weeks prior to Christmas is to the tiny pilgrimage hamlet of Christkindl, just two kilometers away where you'll find a lovely little church and a very busy post office. It is here that Austrian children send their Christmas letters and all are answered by the Christkindl post office. You may wish to mail a card from here as the stamps and postmark are somewhat prized. There is also a massive, wonderfully intricate, 'Rube Goldberg'-style, mechanical Nativity scene on display. Completed just before the war, it is the work of a single local hobbyist who took some 40 years to build it — in his living room.

For a reasonably-priced (400 AS/ \$35) private tour of the town in English, contact the tourist office and request Ms. Renate Hammer-schmid.

### Hotel Mader

Solid is the word for this recently renovated hotel located on the main square in the very center of town across from the tourist office. The comfortable, spacious guestrooms have white painted walls, light wood ceilings and substantial dark wood furniture. They come equipped with cable TV, direct-dial telephone, minibar and a sparkling, well-lit bathroom.

Breakfast is downstairs in the

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

## STEYR

**Population:** 39,000

**Altitude:** 1,017 feet

Approximate distances from:

Salzburg	140 km	87 miles
Linz	40 km	25 miles
Vienna	170 km	105 miles

### Steyr Tourist Office:

Stadtplatz 27

Phone: 07252/53229

Fax: 07252/53229-15

Mon-Fri 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday-Holidays 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

### Sight-seeing:

Private, in-English, tours available through the tourist office for about \$35.

During Advent season an old postal bus leaves from the main square about once each hour for Christkindl. The fare is 20 AS (\$1.75). ☒

café where you'll be joined by local farmers and shoppers dropping by for coffee or a morning snack.

On good weather days, the scene moves outside to a pleasant courtyard.

The combination of comfort, location and price make the Mader our first choice in Steyr.

**Address:** Hotel Mader, Stadtplatz 36, A-4400, Steyr

**Phone:** 07252/53358-0

**Fax:** 07252/533506

**Location:** On the main square

**Rooms:** 21 Singles, 32 doubles

**Proprietor:** Johann Mader

**Prices:** Singles 660 to 770 AS (\$55-\$65), doubles 880 to 1100 AS (\$73-\$92), including breakfast

**Meals:** All available

**Facilities:** Lift, café, courtyard

**Credit cards:** All

**Disabled:** Not suitable

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Unload on the main square and park in a public lot across the river about 250 yards away

**Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20 G \$

### Romantik Hotel Minichmayr

This member of the Romantik Hotel group is the best-known and most expensive hotel in Steyr. Its setting is quite lovely, on a bluff looking out over the joining of the two rivers, Enns and Steyr, and on to the old town. The view from several of the guest rooms and the hotel's dining room, particularly at night, is most attractive.

Public rooms are typical of the Austrian countryside with lots of light wood, paneled, painted ceilings and oriental carpets.

Guestrooms, while well-equipped and comfortable enough, just didn't quite get our juices flowing.

The hotel's restaurant was another matter, however. Based on our experience, the chef's *Toque* it was just awarded by Gault Millau is well-deserved. In the first place, the room's view — in early December we were looking over an old town that sparkled with the lights of Christmas — puts one in the right frame of mind. And the kitchen produces dishes that have an adventurous style and nuance beyond traditional Austrian cooking. That became immediately apparent with our first course, *Carpaccio vom Hirschen mit Marinieren* (150 AS/\$12.50). This dish — usually raw beef pounded paper thin and drizzled with olive oil, then topped with capers and finely

## STEYR HOTELS

Continued from page 3

chopped onion — is fairly standard stuff. Here, it came with walnut oil and intensely flavorful tiny wild mushrooms. One main course, slices of moist, tender pheasant breast in a rich rosemary sauce, with white cabbage and Potatoes Anna (215 AS/\$18), was perfect for the winter evening. Medallions of *Reh und Hirschen* (280 AS/\$24), small and large deer, with a cabernet sauce thick with wild mushrooms, was a substantial dish and almost as good as the pheasant, though perhaps a shade wild for our taste. Both went well with the Austrian red wine — Blaufränkisch (410 AS/\$35), vintage 1989 from Burgenland — our waiter convinced us to try.

**Address:** Hotel Minichmayr, Haratzmüllerstrasse 1-3, A-4400, Steyr

**Phone:** 07252/53410

**Fax:** 07252/53419

**Location:** Across the river from the old town

**Rooms:** 19 Singles, 22 doubles, three apartments

**Proprietor:** Ingo Viertler

**Prices:** Singles 725 to 1170 AS (\$61-\$100), doubles 950 to 1620 AS (\$81-\$138), breakfast included

**Meals:** Breakfast, lunch, dinner

**Facilities:** Lift, lovely terrace overlooking river and old town, sauna, solarium, *gemütlich* bar

**Credit cards:** All

**Disabled:** Not suitable

**Closed:** First week in January

**Parking:** Free - on street

**Other:** Restaurant gets one *Toque* from Gault Millau

**Hotel Rating:** ABOVE AVERAGE 14/20

**Restaurant:** EXCELLENT 15/20

### Schwechater Hof

Located only a two-minute walk above the square next to the Parish Church is the friendly Schwechater Hof. With just seven rooms it is more restaurant than hotel. Nonetheless you'll get a warm welcome from the Pötzl family, Otmar,

Elfriede, Eva and Strubbi, the hound in residence.

That short walk from the square will save you some money. Though the Schwechater Hof doesn't quite measure up to the Mader, it's close and the price difference for a double room is about \$25.

The best room in the house is Number 12. It, like the other six rooms, has cable TV, direct dial phone and minibar.

**Address:** Schwechater Hof, Sieringerstrasse 122, A-4400, Steyr

**Phone:** 07252/53067

**Fax:** 07252/5477054

**Location:** Above the main square near the Parish Church

**Rooms:** Seven rooms, six doubles, with private bathroom facilities

**Proprietor:** Family Pötzl

**Prices:** Singles 550 (\$47), doubles 830 to 880 AS (\$71-\$75), including breakfast.

**Meals:** Breakfast, lunch, dinner

**Facilities:** Lift, beer garden, *stuberl*

**Credit cards:** Mastercard only

**Disabled:** Limited access

**Closed:** Never

**Parking:** Free-ample

**Rating:** AVERAGE 11/20 G \$

### Gasthof Pöchlacher

For Steyr's best bargain, you must stray about 15-minutes walk from the old town to the homey Gasthof Pöchlacher. The alternative to hoofing it is the city bus which stops near the hotel every 15 minutes. Not much English is spoken here, but Herr Pöchlacher and family are so enthusiastic and welcoming that it is a difficulty easily overcome.

Guest rooms are large and comfortable with the standard amenities, except that Herr Pöchlacher hasn't brought in cable TV yet in the fear that his guests will spend too much time in their rooms. Ask for Number 28, a charming double on the top floor with a view toward Christkindl and renting for 660 AS (\$55) per night.

The Pöchlacher's inviting *stuberl* serves some of the best food in the region with entrees priced from 80 to 110 AS (\$7-\$10). Later in the evening you might ask for some of the house's special apricot *schnapps*.

Breakfast is served rather than from a buffet.

**Address:** Gasthof Pöchlacher, Sieringerstrasse 122, A-4400, Steyr

**Phone:** 07252/63173

**Location:** 15 minutes walk from old town

**Rooms:** 19 rooms, including six double, most with private bath (bring your own soap)

**Proprietor:** Ludwig Pöchlacher

**Prices:** Singles 330 AS (\$28), doubles 650 to 800 AS (\$56-\$69), breakfast included.

**Meals:** Breakfast, lunch, dinner

**Facilities:** Cozy *stuberl*, direct dial phones, TV (not cable)

**Credit cards:** Not Accepted

**Disabled:** Not suitable

**Closed:** Last two weeks in August

**Parking:** Free-ample

**Other:** Half board available for 80 AS (\$7) per day

**Rating:** AVERAGE 10/20 G \$ 

## Best Fares Update

There have been a few skirmishes this spring but so far no all out airfare war. DER Tours is a wholesaler for Delta, United, Lufthansa, Air Canada and several other major carriers. Here are samples of their best high season fares as of the end of April, 1994. Shoulder season prices, until May 31 and the month of October, will be \$100 to \$200 less. To book, have your travel agent call 800-782-2424.

	Frankfurt	Zürich
Atlanta	\$741	\$802
Chicago	\$718	\$763
Dallas	\$785	\$858
Miami	\$741	\$796
New York	\$618	\$741
Los Angeles	\$828	\$885
San Fran	\$848	\$885
Seattle	\$885	\$896
Phoenix	\$885	\$974
Denver	\$818	\$885

## 15 SUMMER DESTINATIONS

Continued from page 1

Nepomuk, Obere Mühlbrücke 9, D-96049, Bamberg, phone 0951/25183, fax 0951/26651. Rooms from \$80.

Wilde Rose, Kesslerstr. 7, Bamberg, D-96047, phone 0951/28317, fax 0951/22071. Rooms from \$55.

**Where to Eat:** Weinhaus Messerschmitt, Lange Str. 41, Bamberg, D-96049, phone 0951/27866, fax 0951/26141. Three course meals from \$28.

### Drive the Mosel

Less traveled and prettier than the Rhine. Prearrange to visit wineries and taste some wine along the way. (For information the **German Wine Information Bureau**, 79 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016, phone 212-213-7036). See Trier and its Roman ruins and explore romantic wine towns such as Bernkastel Kues, Zell and Cochem. Carry *Mairs Die General Karte #12 & 15* for Germany.

**Don't Miss:** **Burg Eltz**, one of Europe's great fortress/castles.

**Recommended Hotels:** Gutshotel, Balduinstr. 1, Obere Mühlbrücke 9, Neumagen Dhron, D-96049, phone 0951/25183, fax 0951/26651. Rooms from \$80, three-course meals from about \$28.

Hotel Petrisberg, Sickingenstr. 11, Trier, D-54292, phone 0651/41181, fax 0651/73273. Rooms from about \$55.

**Where to Eat:** Gutshotel

### Retreat to Coburg

This pretty town of gardens, historic buildings and about 50,000 residents has enough to offer for at least two full days of sight-seeing. Visit the **Veste**, the fortress that guards the town from above, where Martin Luther lived for a time in 1530. See **Ehrenburg Castle** where Prince Albert, husband to Queen Victoria, spent his childhood. Some might be interested in a tour of the

**Hummel** factory in nearby Rödental where the famous figurines are made. The town has two very good restaurants, the **Schaller**, a Michelin one-star and the **Kräutergarten**. Stay outside the city at moderately-priced **Schloss Neuhof**.

On your way from Bamberg to Coburg, or vice versa, you might spend a night at **Hotel Feiler** in tiny Wiesenttal, about 30 miles southwest of Bayreuth. Your main purpose here is to dine in the Feiler's one-star restaurant that specializes in dishes featuring very fresh wild mushrooms. Carry *Die General Karte #14* for Germany.

**Don't Miss:** The Veste's museum, especially the weapons collection.

**Where to Stay:** Schloss Neuhof, Neuhof Str. 10, Coburg, D-96450, phone 09563/20 51, fax 09563/21 07.

**Where to Eat:** Restaurant Schaller, Ketschendorfer Str. 22, Coburg, D-96450, Coburg, phone 095561/250 74. Three course meals from about \$40. Restaurant Kräutergarten, Rosenauer Str. 30, Coburg, D-96450, phone 09561/750 05. Three-course meals from about \$35.

**The Feiler Option:** Hotel Feiler, Oberer Markt 4, Wiesenttal, D-91346, phone 09196/322, fax 09196/362. Rooms from about \$60, three-course meals from about \$45.

### Hide Out In Seeg

Use this village, about 20 kilometers north of Füssen in Bavaria, as a base to explore the region or just, in 90s vernacular, chill out. Tour, if you haven't before, the **Royal Castles** of Neuschwanstein, Hohenschwangau and Linderhof, understanding they will be choked with tourists. Drive through the forest (take the tiniest backroads; see *Die General Karte #25* for Germany) to the beautiful but also crowded **Wieskirche**. You might try a scenic drive south into Austria to Reutte, Weissenbach, returning by going east over the

Oberjoch-Pass to Immenstadt. From there head east back to Seeg by way of Pfronten.

**Don't Miss:** Wieskirche

**Where to Stay:** Pension Heim, Aufmberg 8, D-87637, Seeg, phone 08364/258, fax 08364/1051. Rooms from about \$42.

**Where to Eat:** Gasthof Hirsch, Kirchplatz 3, Seeg, phone 08364/353, three-course meals from about \$12.

### Head North to Hamburg

The great majority of

American tourists head south from the Frankfurt Airport. The only major city in this list of 15 recommendations is under-visited and too often overlooked Hamburg. Rent a bike at the Tourist Information office near the railway station and pedal around the Aussenalster and the Binnenalster, the city's lakes; or take a ride aboard one of the glass-roofed boats that ply them. See St. Pauli's Sunday morning fish market. For best people watching, stroll the naughty **Reeperbahn**. If it fits your budget, or you're up for a splurge, the best small, city hotel we've seen is Hamburg's little **Abtei**.

Those who want to avoid even a northern big city might visit the spa town of Bad Pyrmont south of Hanover and stroll its magnificent gardens, or go east from there into the Harz Mountains, staying at Bad Sachsa or Goslar, which has an old town that gets three Michelin stars — worth a journey.

**Don't Miss:** A plate of Labskaus at the **Old Commercial Room**, Englische Planke 10, Hamburg, phone 040/366319.

**Where to Stay:** Hotel Abtei, Abteistrasse 14, D-20149, Hamburg, phone 040/44 95 95, fax 040/44 98 20. Rooms from about \$150.

Hotel Bergkurpark, Ockelstr. 11, D-31812, Bad Pyrmont, phone 05281/4001, fax 05281/4004. Rooms from

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## 15 SUMMER DESTINATIONS

Continued from page 5

about \$58, three-course meals from about \$20.

Harzhotel Romantischer Winkel, Bismarckstr. 23, D-37441, Bad Sachsa, phone 05523/3040, fax 05523/304122. Rooms from about \$60, three-course meals from about \$23.

**Where to Eat:** Ratsweinkeller, Grosse Johannisstrasse 2, Hamburg, phone 040/36 41 53, three-course meals from about \$22.

In Bad Pyrmont and Bad Sachsa, dine at the hotels listed above.

### Austria

## Drive the Wachau-Danube

Go east from Grein to

Krems stopping for sure at Melk and Dürnstein. You may wish to overnight at the beautifully situated **Schloss Dürnstein**, though it might be somewhat of a letdown if one is expecting a *gemütlich* country hotel with outstanding food. A much less expensive alternative is to push on south from Krems to the pilgrimage town of Mariazell, staying at the simple but friendly **Gasthof zum Alten Brauhaus**. Next day go to Hieflau via Weichsleboden, Wildalpen and Pallau, a remote part of Austria and a glorious drive.

**Don't Miss:** The library of the **Abbey at Melk**

**Where to Stay:** Schloss Dürnstein, A-3601, Dürnstein, phone 02711/212, fax 02711/351. Rooms from about \$110 including breakfast and dinner.

Gasthof zum Alten Brauhaus, 5 Wiener Strasse, A-8630, Mariazell, phone 03882/2523. Rooms from about \$26, three-course meals from about \$10.

**Where to Eat:** At the hotels listed above

**Map:** *Die General Karte #1 & 2 for Austria*

## Checkout Graz

A marvelous, relatively

undiscovered old-world city, the capital of Styria. Tramp its *altstadt*, taking in the **Zeughaus** (arsenal), the **Cathedral**, the **Mausoleum of Ferdinand II**, the **Stryrian Heimatwerk** (craft store) and the **Farmer's Market** across from the opera house. On a warm summer night, grab a table at one of the outdoor cafés on Mehlplatz, center of Graz nightlife, known as the "Bermuda Triangle."

For a really off-the-tourist-track excursion, drive south to Ehrenhausen, and explore one of Europe's unknown wine roads; the **Südsteirische-Weinstrasse**. A portion of it runs along the Slovenian border. The tourist office in Graz can provide detailed information. Of course, another excursion would be to Piber, where the **Lippizaner Stallions** of Vienna's **Spanish Riding School** are trained.

**Don't Miss:** The facade of the **Hof Backerei** at Hofgasse 6.

**Where to Stay:** Erzherzog Johann, Sackstrasse 3-5, A-8010 Graz, phone 0316/811616, fax 0316/811 515. Rooms from about \$80.

**Where to Eat:** Kepler-Keller, Stempfergasse 6, phone 822449. Main courses about \$7 to \$16.

## Tour Burgenland

You'll be far from the

hurly burly in this unique and undiscovered part of Austria south of Vienna on the Hungarian border. Interesting towns are Mörbisch and Rust, both on the rather strange **Neusiedler See**, a 124 square-mile body of water surrounded by reeds, only seven feet at its deepest point and which sometimes mysteriously disappears; the last time being from 1868 to 1872. Walk the towns, note the rooftop storks' nests and rest in the garden of a *heurigen* (wine taverns) for a snack and a glass of fresh white wine made on the premises.

**Don't Miss:** The Neusiedler See

**Where to Stay:** Seehotel Rust, A-7071, Rust, phone 02685/381, fax 02685/381 419. Rooms from about \$80.

**Where to Eat:** Any of the wine taverns.

## Take an Alpine Drive

Cross the Gerlos Pass,

overnight in an atmospheric old hunting lodge, stop at Europe's highest waterfall, the **Krimml**, drive the **Grossglockner**, one of the most spectacular auto routes in all of Europe, and finish in Badgastein. From the Autobahn connecting Salzburg and Innsbruck, go south on Red Road #169 near Jenbach, take #165 east through Gerlos and over the pass. At the other side is the Krimml and in Wald im Oberpinzgau overnight at the **Jagdschloss Graf Recke**. Early the next day (to avoid traffic), continue east toward Bruck, going south from there over the Grossglockner. The toll is about \$25. On the other side, past Heiligenblut, go east on Red Road #106 and at Obervellach go north putting your car on a train (about \$15 one way) at Mallnitz for the 10-minute trip through the **Tauern Tunnel** to Badgastein.

**Don't Miss:** The glacier seen from the Franz-Josephs-Höhe at the top of the Grossglockner

**Where to Stay:** Jagdschloss Graf Recke, Rosenthal 63, A-5742, Wald im Oberpinzgau, phone 06565/6417, fax 06565/6920. Rooms from about \$55, three-course meals from about \$20.

Haus Hirt, An der Kaiserpromenade, A-5640 Badgastein, phone 06434/2797, fax 06434/279748. Rooms from about \$60, including breakfast and dinner.

**Where to Eat:** At the hotels listed above

**Map:** *Die General Karte #7 for Austria*

Our fifth suggestion for Austria is to stop for a few days in Steyr. See page one story.

### Switzerland

## Walk & Rest in Kandersteg

Beautifully situated at the end of the Kander Valley and surrounded on three sides by rugged mountains which seem to rise almost vertically from the flat valley floor. Spend your days walking and the late afternoons and early evenings in a chair from which you can do two things: take on a little sustenance and watch the mountains. You will find such a chair in the garden of the **Waldhotel Doldenhorn**. For a one-day excursion, drive your car onto the train that goes south through the **Lötschberg Tunnel** (17 minutes). From the other end at Goppenstein, it's only a short drive down to the Rhône Valley and Sion, an interesting city where French is the first language. See the **Valais Museum of Fine Art**.

**Don't Miss:** Long walks

**Where to Stay:** Waldhotel Doldenhorn, CH-3718, Kandersteg, phone 033/751818, fax 751828. Rooms from about \$68, three-course meals from about \$25.

Reudihus, CH-3718, Kandersteg, phone 033/751580, fax 751828. Rooms from about \$70. The restaurant features authentic Swiss dishes and set meals begin at about \$18.

**Where to Eat:** At the above hotels

**Map:** *Die General Karte #4 for Switzerland*

## Headquarter at Château d'Oex

From this quiet little town (pronounced Chateau Day) one can do easy rail or car excursions to several of the country's greatest tourist attractions: Montreux and **Castle Chillon** (30 miles); Aigle and other vineyard villages along the lake; the fortified town of

Gruyères (13 miles); fashionable Gstaad (10 miles) and the mountain resorts of Villars (15 miles) and Les Diablerets (22 miles). Even Lausanne and its terrific new **Olympic Museum** is less than 50 miles away.

**Don't Miss:** The cable car ride to the **Les Diablerets Glacier** from the **Col du Pilon**.

**Where to Stay:** Hostellerie Bon Accueil, CH-1837, Chateau d'Oex, phone 029/46320, fax 029/45126. Rooms from about \$70.

**Where to Eat:** Hotel Bahnhof, CH-3792, Saanen (about 3 km from Gstaad), phone 030/41422. Meals from about \$12.

**Map:** *Die General Karte #2 for Switzerland*

## Kickback in Brienz

This unpretentious lakeside village with a great view of the mountains is close to many attractions and known as the birthplace of Swiss woodcarving. Make advance arrangements to tour **H. Huggler-Wyss** (CH-3855, Brienz, phone 036/511679), manufacturer of wood sculptures. Just outside of town is Ballenberg, the **Swiss Open Air Museum**, a collection of about 60 farmhouses, barns and mills, all fully operational. Also nearby are the **Giessbach Falls** and, of course, the lake. One could also explore the **Jungfrau Region** from Brienz. Interlaken is 11 miles away.

**Don't Miss:** Ballenberg

**Where to Stay:** Grandhotel Giessbach, CH-3855, Brienz, phone 036/513535, fax 036/513707. Rooms from about \$105.

Brienzerburli, CH-3855, Brienz, phone 036/511241, fax 036/513841. Rooms from about \$70.

**Where to Eat:** At the hotels listed above.

**Map:** *Die General Karte #2 for Switzerland*

## Unwind in Wildhaus

Though Wildhaus has the advantages of a beautiful setting and few tourists, the main destination here is the relaxing hotel **Alpenrose**, located on the hillside above the town. Excursions to St. Gallen, Appenzell and Liechtenstein, even Bregenz in Austria, are convenient if you can pull yourself away from the hotel. To find tiny Wildhaus, draw a straight line south of St. Gallen about 60 km.

**Don't Miss:** Seeing Appenzell cheese made in the village of Stein.

**Where to Stay:** Hotel Alpenrose, CH-9658, Wildhaus, phone 074/52121, fax 074/51052. Rooms from about \$85.

**Where to Eat:** At the Alpenrose.

**Map:** *Die General Karte #1 for Switzerland*

## Tour Graubünden

From Chur head over the Albula Pass to the part of Switzerland where Romansh is spoken. Visit the towns of Guarda, Zernez, Zuoz, Scuol, Pontresina and, for shopping, St. Moritz. You will find a little Italy in the region's food and architecture.

**Don't Miss:** Zuoz & Pontresina

**Where to Stay:** Hotel Klarer, CH-7524, Zuoz, phone 082/71321, fax 082/71214. Rooms from about \$70.

Schlosshotel Chastè, CH-7553, Tarasp (near Scuol), phone 081/8641775, fax 081/8649970. Rooms from about \$91.

**Where to Eat:** Hotel La Collina, CH-7504, Pontresina, phone 082/60121. Three course meals from about \$35.

Hotel Bettini, CH-7530, Zernez, phone 082/81508. Three course meals from about \$25.

Haus Paradies, CH-7551, Ftan, phone 081/8641325. Three course meals from about \$55.

**Map:** *Die General Karte #3 for Switzerland*

# READERS' FORUM

## Zürich Airport Hotel

Re your quest for a hotel for a first or last night stay within easy driving distance of Zürich's Kloten Airport, I have a personal favorite which offers an interesting town for browsing as well as a quiet, comfortable, not overly expensive accommodation.

The **Hotel Promenade** in Schaffhausen is only 35 km from Kloten on uncongested back roads if you take the route that cuts across a small corner of Germany before returning to Switzerland. The hotel looks on the outside like a remodeled turn of the century grammar school (and perhaps it is) but inside the rooms are crisply modern and compact and the location on a quiet residential street is heaven if you arrive longing for a nap. It's easy to find and has its own large parking lot.

There is a charming streetside dining garden for relaxing in the fresh air and, when your ready for a stroll, it is only a short walk along a park and over a pedestrian bridge into the heart of Altstadt, resplendent with decoratively painted buildings, oriel windows, a towering fortress and a large pedestrian zone.

Service at the Promenade may seem more efficient than personal which is not all bad if you are looking to avoid the tour group atmosphere. Michelin one-star dining is available at the **Rheinhotel Fischerzunft** but we enjoyed a more *bürgerliches*

establishment owned by the local brewery and located on the main thoroughfare in the pedestrian zone. All this quiet and convenience is listed in the new Swiss Michelin at 105-180 Sfr. (\$73-\$126), breakfast included. Do give it a try.

Mary Ellen Hunter  
Kildeer IL

## Hotel in Meersburg

My wife and I recently visited the city of Meersburg on the Bodensee. We recommend **Hotel Seehof**, Unterstadstrasse 36, D-88709, Meersburg, telephone 07532/6041, Frau Sauter, standard double with WC and shower overlooking the lake, 180 DM/\$103 (or 200 DM/\$114 for the large double). Exceptionally clean, stocked refrigerator, clean towels daily, telephone and color TV. The breakfast was one of the best we had on our entire 21-day German holiday. Free samples of *schnapps* at the registration desk — the hotel has its own vineyard and distillery. If you like music do not miss the **Burgkeller** up the street.

David Oplet  
Belleville IL

## Unlisted Hotels

Being an annual visitor to Switzerland and familiar with many of the hotels mentioned, I would like to make some comments.

Neither the **Schloss Hotel Castell** in Zuoz nor the **Cigogne** in Geneva are listed in the Swiss Hotel Guide. This puzzles me since that guide is very complete and comprehensive.

Susi E. Kanuch  
Van Nuys CA

(Ed. Note: *The Swiss Hotel Guide* contains listings of hotels which are

members of the *Swiss Hotel Association*. No doubt the two hotels are not *SHA* members. Both these excellent hotels, by the way, are listed in the 1994 Michelin Red Guide for Switzerland.)

## Sprechen Sie English?

One of your contributors commented in a letter to your publication that "English is spoken by nearly everyone (in Switzerland)."

This is a very misleading statement; there are many areas in Switzerland where our bad German and fractured French have definitely been an asset. The French parts of the country stick closely to the French language.

Rose Dreyfus  
San Diego CA

(Ed. Note: *Ms. Dreyfus is right. To say that English is spoken by everyone in Switzerland is incorrect. In small villages and hamlets, particularly where French is spoken, one comes across many who do not speak English and a little German or French is most helpful. On the other hand, we can't recall a hotel anywhere — and only a couple of restaurants — where someone didn't speak at least some English.*)

## Lucerne Hotel

Just a short note to thank you for the arrangements that you made for the *Gemütlichkeit* subscrib-

ers, at the **Grand Victoria Jungfrau**. As long time subscribers, we looked forward to taking our family to Interlaken. I can't begin to tell you how pleased we all were with our visit. From the beginning, the hotel staff was extraordinary in their attention to our needs. The *Gemütlichkeit* Special Package received world-class service just as all the guests of the hotel do.

In fact, even with the hotel fully booked we received a junior suite that was one of the finest accommodations we have stayed in since the **Hirschgasse**, in Heidelberg, Germany, another *Gemütlichkeit* recommendation.

Let us also recommend the hotel **Des Balances**, in Lucerne. This is the oldest hotel in Lucerne, situated in old town, on the river, with a view of the Pilatus Mountain. This recently renovated hotel has been a regular stop for us in the past few years, and at 250 Sfr. (\$175) per night double, is a best buy in a very expensive city. Ask for a second-floor room overlooking the river and you will enjoy a wondrous view of the old bridge which is about to reopen after a tragic fire destroyed most of the structure.

Colin F McGowan  
Marriotsville, Maryland ☒

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